

National Forest Advisory Board (NFAB) Meeting

February 16, 2010

Latchstring Restaurant, Spearfish Canyon Lodge

Members Present:

Jim Heinert, Chairman; Tom Blair, Carson Engelskirger, Ev Hoyt, Bill Kohlbrand, Richard Krull, Colin Paterson, Bob Paulson, Jim Scherrer, Nels Smith, Donovan Sprague, Hugh Thompson, Jeff Vonk,

Forest Service Representatives:

Craig Bobzien, Dennis Jaeger, Frank Roberts, Wanda Wheeler, Claudia Hills, Bob Thompson, Steve Kozel, Lynn Kolund, Rhonda O'Byrne, Tom Willems, Rick Hudson, Cheryl Chatham, Ruben Leal, Twila Morris - Recorder.

Others:

Approximately five members of the public were in attendance. Five Congressional representatives were also in attendance; Chris Blair (Johnson – D, South Dakota), Eric Zimmer (Johnson – D, South Dakota, Mark Haugen (Thune – R, South Dakota), Sandy Massey (Noem – R, South Dakota), DeAnna Kay (Enzi – R, Wyoming)

Members Absent:

Sam Brannan, Nancy Kile, Becci Rowe, Craig Tieszen,

Welcome:

Chair Heinert: We have a quorum; call the meeting to order (1:04 p.m.)

Approve January Minutes:

Heinert: Do we have a motion to approve the minutes from the January meeting? Motion made by Tom Blair second by Ev Hoyt, motion carried.

Approve the Agenda:

Heinert: Are there any changes to the Agenda?

Bobzien: We would like to add one hot topic, which is an update on the new Planning Rule.

Heinert: Do we have a motion to approve the agenda? Motion made by Jim Scherrer, second made by Tom Blair, motion carried.

Housekeeping:

Bobzien: Thank you for your indulgence in this special meeting in this special location. There are several people here today attending their first NFAB meeting, also joining us today is the entire Black Hills National Forest Leadership Team, our Capital City Coordinators, and our special Panel on Recreation.

[Introductions]

Heinert: Thank you Craig, with that we'll move into our Hot Topics.

Hot Topics

Bark Beetle Update

Bobzien: For the last few months, as a Board, we've been focused on the situation with the Bark Beetles. We've reported on the work we're doing with the States, Counties, and all of the other interests we have engaged. The number of community meetings that have occurred is continuing to grow and great numbers of individuals are attending these meetings. Before the meeting today Steve and Hugh said that there were 40 people at a meeting they had attended. Conservation Districts are giving advice at these meetings. The Black Hills National Forest continues to strive to make good choices, to be proactive, to provide good information, and make sure our actions on the ground make sense.

Several in this room attended the roundtable discussion with Representative Noem. Mr. Chairman, there may be some here who would like to comment on that meeting.

Heinert: Are there any Board members who wish to comment?

Kohlbrand: On the Wyoming side, we've done workshops in Upton, Sundance, Alladin, and other surrounding cities. There have been 25 to 40 people in attendance at each meeting; there is a lot of interest. We are doing a program with a 4-H club in Newcastle to get the kids involved.

Scherrer: Representative Noem's meeting was well attended. There were representatives from all aspects in the Black Hills; timber, recreation, business, Counties and several from the Board were there as well. Representative Noem did a nice job of pulling out the interests that we all brought to the table - we had folks talking about the challenge we face with the regulations. Of course everyone wants money, and that's probably the least of what we'll come up with. There were a number of commissioners in attendance and I was struck by the level of involvement by the County officials. The Counties have begun to push their private landowners to take responsibility for their own land. Personally I walked away feeling that she heard that the biggest resistance of getting things done is the bog down in the regulations. The Forest Service has answered the bell when they've had the opportunity. For example, the day that the judge put a stay of execution in the Norbeck, less than 24 hours later, the Forest Service was in there and accomplished what they needed to do. People need to deal with the fact that we have a crisis in the Black Hills.

Heinert: I would like to echo what Mr. Scherrer said, I appreciate that Congresswoman Noem took time out early in her term to inform herself and educate herself on the pine beetle issue. I hope that this is an indication that she is going to work with us. I believe the meeting resulted in our being able to communicate a 3-part message: 1. Urgency - this has reached a level of epidemic proportions; 2. Providing regulatory relief - so we can move quickly; 3. Make certain that this aspect of Forest Service operations gets the appropriate financial resource priority to get what is needed to do the job.

Bobzien: Mr. Chair – you’ve covered all the points in my notes, thank you.

Heinert: Thank you Craig, we’ll go on to our next hot topic; that being the New Planning Rule.

Jaeger: I’ve brought along some information for the members of the Board regarding the new Planning Rule. This is how we put together a Forest Plan. The Forest Plan is the guiding document.

Last fall we had a listening session at the Ramkota, on what you would like to see in a Planning Rule. On March 16, there will be a public meeting at the Ramkota for public comment on the draft rule. This meeting will be for specific public comments based on the draft. The draft is on the Forest Service website, it is about 50 pages long. I’ve provided a summary, a news release, and FAQ. If you want more detail into on the proposal, I would refer you to the website. The public meeting will be after the NFAB meeting on Wednesday, March 16th at the Ramkota in Rapid City.

Engelskirger: Dennis, what are your thoughts on the draft?

Jaeger: I’m still trying to understand it, and understand the changes. I’m hoping for more flexibility, but I’m still reading it. We have folks looking at it in our Planning Shop and in the Regional Office, and they will be able to shed some light on it for us.

Heinert: Any other questions for Dennis?

Paulson: What can you tell us about Lady C getting dropped out of this week’s continuing resolution?

Bobzien: We knew it was at risk, but we did not know that it was a strike.

Paulson: What is the status of it now? What will the Forest Service propose?

Bobzien: If there are certain projects that aren’t ready to go, then Lady C would be ready to be considered.

Heinert: I would like to move on to our regular agenda at this time.

Regular Agenda - Winter Recreation

Bobzien: Rhonda O’Byrne is the District Ranger here on the Northern Hills. We are pleased that she has hosted this meeting today. I’ll let Rhonda take it from here.

O’Byrne: Thank you Craig, I’ll be brief and I will be on the panel when we get to that point. I would like to echo Craig’s appreciation to all of you for allowing us to move your meeting here. We also hosted the Forest Leadership Team here this morning, and it is great to have the Board here. I’ve been on the Black Hills for four years. Travel Management has been one of the biggest things we’ve been dealing with since I’ve been here. Now that we have a decision on Travel Management, we’ve been talking a lot about partnerships; this is not new to us. Our snowmobile program has been very successful. Also successful is our non-motorized partnerships we have for our ski trails. This is my focus, we are moving toward the motorized trail system and new opportunities. We have been here before (with a need to implement and grow a program) and we found ways to make it work, and we can do it again. That is why I want us to focus on the winter recreation, as we focus on the motorized travel plan, we can learn from our winter recreation partnerships.

Heinert: This is a refreshing change of venue, thank you for hosting the meeting Rhonda. Craig, let’s go on to the Forest Partnership topic.

Bobzien: On your agenda, we posed the question “Why Partnerships”. As Rhonda said, we’ve been involved in partnerships for well over 100 years. We’ll talk about where we are today, and what the future holds. It’s difficult to narrow the selection for panelists with our partners, because we have over 200 partners and volunteer groups at some level or another, which is incredible.

As we are in a position now to enhance our partnerships, we are planning to work with the Board for the next two months, for your advice and guidance. You might say – “why would you ask for advice on something you’ve been doing for decades?” It’s because of the wisdom of this Board, to take a look at how we are operating, to ask those questions.

As we talk about partnerships I would like to have a common definition; volunteer agreements that have mutual benefits to both parties. This is not a contractual relationship. We have panelists here today, a wide array of folks that we engage with. Thanks to all of you who were willing to join us today. Next month we’ll engage other groups, Tribes, Job Corps, and others who are down doing the heavy lifting for the Forest. You’ll be exposed to several different partners.

As Board members, you may be involved as a partner as well. We want to tap into your wisdom, and experience. I would ask you Mr. Chairman, with our ultimate goal being to develop a Partnership Strategy, to consider a subcommittee that could work with our staff. I ask that Board participation would be influenced by your knowledge and interest. We have some questions prepared today for our panel to help guide the outcome.

Why do we partner? It’s clearly how people come together for a joint purpose, mutual objectives and a way to combine resources. The budget is in the news right now. I heard a quote on the radio this morning “People want more government then they are willing to pay for”. In some ways when we have motivated partners, appropriated dollars only go so far.

In our panel today, you’ll hear from folks who have just started working with the Forest Service, and others that have been working with us for three decades.

As I look at it – and back to the mutual interest; this is sacred lands to Native people, and there is work that gets done on the land that strikes the heart, people care. I ask you to think about this,

and in the end, us moving forward in 2011 with a Partnership Strategy – it will be your wisdom that helps us.

Things we grapple with – why not have partnerships? Congressional intent, we don't get a partnership line item in our budget – sometimes we get earmarks, maybe building money to build a new dispatch center, but that money can't be used to restore an old historic building. We have to honor congressional intent. We have champions within our organization that we believe will help us make things work.

I have a personal responsibility for the health and safety of a volunteers and partners the same way as I do an employee. If someone uses a chainsaw and hurts themselves, I'm responsible for that. I have an oversight and responsibility that is a lifetime lasting thing.

Tom Willems is our Partnership Coordinator. Tom will give a thumb nail sketch of where we are today.

Tom Willems: Thanks Craig, Mr. Chairman, Board members, and public. This is a unique event for me to be up here not as the Travel Management Planner, but as the Partnership Coordinator. Where we are actually coincides fairly closely with our Travel Management planning with the Board. I started out as a professional archeologist, and many of you on the Board and in the audience, I've collaborated with and discussed things other than travel management. The collaborative process we've had through the travel management process is all about partnerships. Implementation of the decision is if nothing else about partnerships, which have significantly increased.

Many of you may not realize it, but I spent five months in the Region 2 Regional Office doing Travel Management for the Region. My involvement based on my experience with this group, got me into other areas of recreation as well. I started to take a look at where the Black Hills is. As Partnership Coordinator, I started going into the records – about four years ago was the first regional initiative to see where we were at on travel management. We have about 90 partners; State of Wyoming, State of South Dakota, many of the Tribal groups, as well as business professionals and other nonprofit organizations. Today we are going to talk with some of these partners.

Heinert: Back to Craig to introduce our panel.

Bobzien: Panel members please come on up. We have Jean Kennedy with the South Dakota Snowmobile Association, Kevin Kuchenbecker with the Deadwood Historic Preservation Trust, Perry Jewitt with Ridge Riders, and Woody Hanson with South Dakota Off Highway Vehicle Coalition. We also have Bonnie Jones & Rhonda O'Byrne from our Northern Hills District.

Jean Kennedy: When the Black Hills Snowmobile Association was formed, the number of trails was minor, now we have 350 miles of trails in the Black Hills and 1,500 miles of trails in the state of South Dakota. We work closely with the Northern Hills District; we also have private landowners we work with. Most of the trails are on the Forest Service land. The Black Hills have earned National recognition.

We have a very successful partnership with the Forest Service. We held a round table discussion with everyone involved in making the trail system work; loggers, snowmobilers, etc., and this discussion helped strengthen our relationship. Understanding everyone's needs is helpful.

Kevin Kuchenbecker: Our partnerships date way back. Our mission is to “Preserve, Protect, and Promote” Deadwood and the resources. The dedication of Mount Roosevelt took place on July 4, 1919, and on July 4, 1961, Deadwood was designated as a National Historic Landmark. This is our 50th anniversary. The 20th anniversary of gaming in Deadwood took place in 2009. We are very interested in partnering whenever we can.

We are pleased that the Mount Roosevelt Monument has been restored. Deadwood set aside \$25,000 for the project, and now we are working with Deadwood Police Department to insure security of the site. This summer will be our 4th year of hosting the Archeology field school, and we would welcome help from the Forest Service on this partnership. We partner with the Forest Service for the Days of '76, when the Pack Team is brought in. We are doing Fire Wise in our community and partnering with the Department of Corrections. We partnered with the Black Hills Preservation Trust to work on Meeker Ranch and the Gold Mine.

Perry Jewitt: The Ridge Riders was established in 1985. We hold events on the Northern Hills. We have had an adopt a trail program on Forest Service system trails for the past 15 years. Each year our events grow. Our Dakota 50 is in its 11th year, and it has received National attention. We capped the race at 600 riders.

Woody Hanson: I am the new president of the South Dakota Off Highway Vehicle Coalition. This group was started six years ago, but had lost momentum. We reorganized a month ago, and plan to get to work.

I'm working with a group called the Black Hills Gateway, which is a group of private campground owners around Nemo and Highway 385 that are looking at ways to connect campgrounds to the Forest Service trail system. One of our biggest concerns is the lack of access from campgrounds to the trails.

My main focus right now is to use a \$9,000 grant from Polaris to do an economic impact study. The goal is to get this study done to determine how much money is brought into the communities by OHVs.

Rhonda O'Byrne & Bonnie Jones: [Partnership PowerPoint presentation shown by Bonnie Jones].

O'Byrne: I think that the number one thing we need to make successful partnerships is for both parties to be open and honest about what each wants to get out of the partnership. If this isn't happening up front, there will be disappointment in the outcome of the partnership. The other thing that makes our situation work is the reciprocity between Wyoming and South Dakota.

Vonk: I would like to comment on the value of a collaborative arrangement. The South Dakota trail system is funded by users; gas tax, etc. The money is used to run the program. Two weeks ago, there was a bill in the South Dakota legislation that was a budget based bill. The bill was to move the money from the trails program to the highway fund – which of course we were opposed to. What was impressive to me and the transportation committee was that the room was filled full of snowmobile club members. The bill died because folks turned out to make a difference. We appreciate you taking the time to do it.

Kennedy: We came from all directions of the state to stop that bill.

O’Byrne: We would like to ask the panel members now for their input on what are some of the characteristics of a good partnership, and what are some of the barriers; also, ideas for the future.

Hanson: Mutual respect, and the ability to work for the common good help make a successful partnership. There has to be profit in it for everyone. The main barrier is the massive bureaucracy in dealing with the Government agencies. Also there are many different agencies that don’t seem to communicate with each other.

Blair: Another question I would like to hear answered would be what does each of the groups represented here bring to the table; money, manpower etc.?

Hanson: We bring manpower to the table, and we are involved with several organizations. We have off road vehicles to transport materials, etc.

Jewitt: We run on mostly donations and sponsors to pay for our permits, maintenance, etc. We also have used RAC money and grants. For success, the key is communication. Being up front with the Forest Service; sticking with the times and dates that have been decided upon help the relationship. In the long term, I would like to continue a good relationship with the Northern Hills. Barriers in partnerships are the different user groups; logging, grazing, etc. We have been successful in overcoming the barriers with understanding one another, and create solutions. In the future we would like to see our trails become designated on the Forest Service maps. We would like to continue to do more adopt a trail programs, get more volunteers, and more man hours.

Kuchenbecker: These three folks represent nonprofit organizations, and I am in City Government, so we differ some. Success to me is understanding the needs of both parties. Look at what resources we can share. We all have the opportunity to expand by partnering. Deadwood’s budget is capped at \$6.8 million; we set aside \$250,000 every year for grants outside of Deadwood. Making sure interests and missions mesh is important. As for barriers, you have to make sure you are plugged in to what’s going on in the Hills and what all parties offer. Some projects will take multiple partnerships. You must have a can do attitude.

We have been talking about all kinds of trails; snowmobile, ski, OHV, bikes, what about a National Historic Trail? I believe that interpretation of History in the Black Hills is important. Deadwood gets two million visitors a year – a lot of these folks may not be the snowmobile, OHV, type, but they are here to visit our historic resources. There are interpretive opportunities at Mount Roosevelt. We have a “wagon wheel” of historic trails coming into the Black Hills; I would like to see a National Historic Trail program taking place.

Kennedy: Our biggest success is communication. We have a Governor’s Advisory Council in Pierre, and that group takes our concerns to the Governor. Our roundtable discussion I mentioned earlier is another example of good communication. One barrier is that you have to be aware of what is going on in the State, such as the bill that was introduced that we helped get killed.

O’Byrne: I would like to thank Bonnie for the great presentation. Some partners come in with a clear vision of what they want, and maybe a very short time frame. Our partners have to understand the laws, policy, and regulations that we have to deal with. We have to be able to compromise; you can still have an event, it may be in just a little bit different location, etc. (Rhonda showed a flow chart of the process used to determine if something is a partnership).

Every partnership takes time and resources, and we only have so much capacity, and resources. There are some people or groups who come in with funds and they want something done, which is good, but we have to consider who will maintain it and who will pay for that maintenance.

Blair: If there's one thing we've learned in working with the Forest Service, it's patience, and patience is not all bad. Kevin used the words "can do"; we have a mine in our campground, and the BLM wanted to implode the mine. A study of the mine was done, and it turned out it was home to over 1,000 bats. Rather than implode the mine, we cleaned up the entrance, built a bat cage and partnered with the Historic Preservation Commission to make it an interpretive site. When you do something, tell people about it.

H.Thompson: I appreciate seeing pictures of the barracks in the presentation. I spent the summer of 61 in those barracks. The Forest Service has to be realistic. Craig mentioned that they do not get line items appropriations for partnerships. We began a partnership with the Forest Service and the Crook County Weed and Pest, but it fell flat because the budget couldn't accomplish the cooperative weed spraying. Expectations have to go both ways.

Heinert: Are there any further comments:

Kennedy: I would just like to mention that 31 years ago we started hosting the "Legislative Ride", which we now call the "Governor's Ride". The ride is scheduled for this Saturday, February 19th. After we were in Pierre to challenge the bill, our phones started ringing off the hook with reservations for this year's ride. We have 60 guest signed up this year including the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, State Senators, and many others.

Jaeger: I would like to capture some ideas and opportunities that you may have to suggest. Long term, what do we want to provide? We are the current stewards of your land. What are examples of success and issues? We are looking to the Board for advice and guidance, where are areas we can improve and work together?

Smith: Paralysis from the process could be helped if we define out puts. Management and condition of the resources – it has to look a certain way. If it meets that test it won't have to produce a single thing. Define out puts; miles of trails, board feet of timber, etc. This will give us a greater incentive and willingness to help. A good example is the Cook Lake Tornado. If you would have checked all the boxes, it would have been too late. You have to push the envelope.

Paterson: There are a lot of different projects going on in the Black Hills. Is there coordination between all of the partners? If the Forest Service is the only group that knows what is going on Forest wide, how will we know if there are projects that disagree with one another? Are all partners aware of the overall scheme? We need a system that is coordinated and gets along with one another.

Kohlbrand: In the case of the pine beetle epidemic, there are opportunities to be had with getting out on the leading edge. You could get contractors in small areas if you could sweeten the pot with some green timber. Clear cut areas around the pine beetle patches. We could make a difference and slow the spread.

H.Thompson: The Forest Service in Colorado has a Good Neighbor Policy; this involves

private landowners and their ability to treat timber adjacent to the Forest Service. South Dakota doesn't have the State Legislation to allow a Good Neighbor Policy, but it would help if it did.

Smith: That's true on everything; trails, beetles, private, State, Federal...

Engelskirger: It's great that we have all of this collaboration and coordination, but fast forward ten years – if we don't get ahead of the bark beetles, we'll all lose in the long run. Beetles should be our number one priority, and it doesn't seem like it is sometimes.

Paulson: I see four categories that we should be considering in partnerships, they are: 1. Recreation end users – shooting ranges is one area that we are lacking, 2. Infrastructure – historic preservation, 3. Commodity – grazing, logging, mining, and 4. Asset Enhancement – protect what you have, water, etc. (strategic land exchanges). We can change the pattern of the Forest through land exchanges.

Jaeger: Today is about recreation, the next meeting will be about other partners, and we will have the Sub-Committee. We want to have a focused strategy, to make sure we are all moving forward. How do we say no to partners that don't meet the criteria?

Engelskirger: I would add engagement to Bob's list. Partnerships with groups and organizations take time. Some people are new and they don't understand they have to stick around even when it takes a long time. Also, you must use the information as collaborated on in the final project, it's important for partners to know that they've been heard.

Heinert: Sense of ownership, sense of efficacy for people being involved.

Vonk: There is a hierarchy of importance, and the forest health on the Black Hills National Forest is the most important aspect. If the beetles win, we'll close snowmobile trails because of the danger of falling trees, etc. We need to look at the highest interest that crosscuts everyone's interest and that is Forest health. This beetle thing is the main deal here.

Hoyt: I would echo Carson. It is hard to remain involved. You must nurture these relationships and committees, to keep them alive. You must recognize success. Genuine participation is hard; things take on an ad hoc process. I applaud the SD Snowmobile Association for keeping their objectives alive, and accepting responsibility to nurture the process for the longevity of the efforts.

Sprague: I would like to add the aspect of Tribal historic preservation. With what Kevin suggested, the roads leading into the Black Hills; there is a lot of potential for Tribal historic preservation in that aspect. The Indian Nation is a real untapped resource. Tourists want to see Lakota and American Indian people and their culture.

Jaeger: There will be a listening session on sacred site protection with the Tribes in Pierre on March 10th. The uses of the Black Hills are varied.

Paterson: When people talk about healthy forests - what is a healthy forest? What is healthy for the fish, deer, and birds? Think back to before the human impact, there were much less trees then, and more meadows. We should be thinking in terms of a sustainable ecosystem, how we develop that sustainable ecosystem with partnerships and so on is the question.

Blair: Today the fire is hot; there is more conversation about pine beetles now than ever. Right now we have the attention of everybody. This is the time to continue education. The one issue is bureaucracy. We need to talk to the people who change the rules, so that the process becomes more streamlined. The pine beetles out run the process right now.

Paterson: Will the updated new Planning Rule have any positive changes in the realm of the pine beetle?

Jaeger: Like I said before, I don't know a lot about it right now.

[Re-Cap: Engage – Involvement = Results; “Ownership”; Priority – common interest/purpose - Forest health; Nurture relationships; Tribes; Define sustain ecosystem (healthy); Engage public – focus – process streamlining].

[Define Outputs: Expedite process; Coordination of projects, refine/improve communication; Mix bug & green; Good Neighbor Policy (Colorado); Commit to pine beetle – RCC, infrastructure, communities, asset enhancement (land exchange – riparian areas, etc.)]

Heinert: Are there any further ideas on partnerships?

Bobzien: Thanks to Woody, Perry, Jean, and Kevin; excellent overview – thank you.

For the Board and members of the public – this is an area that when I look at our Forest/your forest the Black Hills National Forest, It's place based in my mind, it's a place based partnership. It's about the Black Hills, about sacred lands, about the forest, about many things. Be thinking about the future. I'm going to ask you Mr. Chairman to go to work on this strategy – with that in mind, when we think of place based, I see our future not being just partnerships with the BBNF but with multiple entities. You all made comments alluding to that. I see that we'll be doing more of the multiple agency partnerships. Why did people come here, Tribes, mining, CCC, etc.? Several of you sit on Boards, Foundations, so I ask you to think about that. Some of you are business people; do you go into joint ventures with every element that comes along? We need a Sub-Committee who would roll up their sleeves and work on this. We are the first Forest in this Region to endeavor into this. We don't have a completed road map. The Board will help us shape this and be the best we can be.

Thank you Tom for saying you've learned to be a little more patient. What is that advice that you can give us, we'll work with you, and our leadership team will be involved in this? Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Heinert: That concludes the panel portion of the meeting.

Public Comments

Chairman Heinert: If anyone from the public wishes to address the Board, please do so.

There are no comments from the public.

Heinert: At this time I would like a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion made by Bill Kohlbrand, second by Jim Scherrer. Meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

Next Meeting:

March 16